

This has been an important concern of all the members of our administration for a long time. Even before we took office, the Vice President and Tipper Gore had begun holding their annual family conferences in Nashville, exploring all the various challenges facing our families in their efforts to stay together and raise their children. And the First Lady has been working on these issues for 25 years. Soon she'll be holding a national conference here on child care to help people get affordable, accessible quality child care. And she's raised some brave questions, like whether we ought to toughen our divorce laws to make it more difficult for parents to walk away from their children.

But the most important work always is done in the hearts and homes of individuals. And it's clear to everyone that in recent decades too many parents, especially men, have not taken their responsibilities seriously enough to their families, their children, and themselves. And there are serious consequences. We know, for example, that the simple failure to pay child support is one of the chief reasons women and children are on welfare. And this week, the Vice President and Secretary Riley released a report showing that when fathers do take an active role, their children do better—much better—in school.

The need for men to take responsibility for themselves and their families is something that unites Americans of all faiths and backgrounds and beliefs. A couple of years ago we had a million man march in the District of Columbia which highlighted the importance of African-American men building families and raising their children and taking responsibility. There were many people who had a lot of political differences with some of the speakers, but no one questioned the need or the sincerity of the hundreds of thousands of men who came from all across America to reaffirm their personal responsibility for their children.

Today, thousands of members of a Christian men's organization, Promise Keepers, are meeting on The Mall in Washington. Again, there are those who have political differences with some of the statements which have been made by some leaders of the organization. But again, no one can question the

sincerity of the hundreds of thousands of men who have filled football stadiums across our country and who are willing to reassume their responsibilities to their families and to their children and, therefore, to our future. Their presence here is yet another example of the Nation's understanding and attention to the need to strengthen our families. There is nothing more important.

When all of us, men and women, take responsibility for raising our children and passing on our values, our families are strengthened. And when our families are stronger, America is stronger.

When I think of how many parents there are out there like my mother, who sacrificed to raise their children, when Hillary and I look with bittersweet pride at our own daughter going off to college now, I'm more acutely aware than ever of the special responsibilities and the wonderful rewards of parenthood. For me, there has been no job, even the Presidency, that is more important. And that should be true for all mothers and fathers. The future of our children is truly in our hands.

Thank for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on Campaign Finance Reform Legislation

October 4, 1997

For 5 years now we have watched the bipartisan effort to reform our campaign finance laws die at the hands of a filibuster in the United States Senate. I hope this year will be different. Republican Senator John McCain and Democratic Senator Russ Feingold have a strong bill that would curb the power of special interests and increase the confidence of the American people in our campaign finance system.

But this Tuesday, their opponents will try once again to kill this bipartisan bill, which has the support of every Democratic Senator and a number of Republicans. They'll try it by using a "poison pill" amendment that will guarantee that reform dies one more time.

Make no mistake, a vote for this killer amendment is a vote to block meaningful reform.

NOTE: The remarks were recorded at 11:10 a.m. on October 4 in the Oval Office at the White House for later broadcast.

**Remarks at a Dinner Honoring
Democratic Gubernatorial
Candidate Don Beyer in Arlington,
Virginia**
October 4, 1997

Thank you. Well, Don, I can say yes to almost everything you asked for. *[Laughter]* I don't know about the car deal. We'll have to negotiate that. *[Laughter]* Everything else, put me down for a "yes." *[Laughter]*

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the warm welcome and thank you for being here for Don and Megan. Thank you for inviting me. I want to begin by expressing my enormous admiration and gratitude for the friendships of two people in this audience with whom I served as Governor, Chuck Robb and Gerry Baliles, two of the greatest Governors Virginia ever saw.

In addition to everything Don said, I also would be remiss if I did not thank Gerry for his leadership of the special commission I established on the future of the airline industry. When we started, every airline company in America but one was losing money. We were in terrible shape. But it is a very different situation today, thanks in no small measure to the recommendations that Gerry Baliles made several years ago that we have implemented. And the country is in your debt, and we thank you, sir.

And I also want you to know from my point of view, I'm not sure there is a person in the United States Senate, given his background, his constituency, the battles he's been through, that when he was really needed, showed more consistent personal courage as a public figure than Chuck Robb has these last 5 years. And I am very grateful to him for that.

I think the most battle-hardened veterans of war would tell you that there are many different ways of displaying courage and very few people can display them in every way

you should in life. Everyone knew what a great battlefield record Chuck Robb had, but I have seen him stand up under withering personal attacks. I have seen him take votes that people in much safer constituencies than his would not take. I have seen him honorably and in a friendly manner disagree with his President when he thought I was wrong, and every time I knew he was doing exactly what he thought was right. And you should be very, very proud of that.

I want to compliment your whole Democratic team. I was glad to see Bill Dolan out there, and I miss L.F. Payne in Congress, but it will be nice seeing him in State office in Virginia. And thank you both for running, and thank you for being a part of this.

Let me say that I have been especially enthusiastic about Don Beyer's campaign for Governor, for what I think are good reasons. But I think the stakes are also very high. Everybody knows that in general Virginia has been a Republican State that able Democrats have been able to beat the odds in on occasion in the last 20 years. I have enjoyed a lot of friends and a lot of support from this State for which I am very grateful.

But I want you to understand why I think this governorship is important to the future of the country. And if you'll give me a few minutes, this is not exactly a political speech, but you have just a—not very long before the election, and I want you to understand what I believe the significance of this election is to the children of this State, to the future of this State, and perhaps for the message it might send to our whole country as we move into next year when there will be 36 Governors' races like this throughout the country.

It was—just 2 days ago marked the 6th anniversary of my formal entry into the race for President on October 3, 1991. I can't believe it was so long ago. *[Laughter]* At that time, I had been Governor for quite a long while, and I was Democrat by heritage, instinct, and conviction. I was extremely frustrated by the state of play in our national debate because I thought there was too much hot air, too much rhetoric, too much sort of tired, old fights replaying themselves over and over again in Washington that had very